Analysis of Routine Work

Understanding all facets of how the work is accomplished and the major areas where variances occur can uncover opportunities for making improvements in the work system part of your change design.

To analyze routine work processes, you:

- Identify the major steps in the process.
- Identify and analyze key variances (for example, look for rework points where delays occur, steps that do not add value, and breakdown areas).
- Identify how to eliminate the key variances or reduce their impact.

Breakdowns, foul-ups, delays, and malfunctions—virtually all unexpected events are variances. Regularly failing to meet agreed-upon deadlines and quality standards is also a variance.

When identifying variances, consider:

- The physical layout of people, equipment, and resources.
- The skills and knowledge of employees.
- Employees' levels of motivation.
- Availability of resources and information.
- Timeliness and accuracy of performance feedback**.**

Analysis of Nonroutine Work

Work that is primarily nonroutine or nonlinear is often called "knowledge work." Knowledge work:
- Is "unprogrammed and requires the application or creation of knowledge." (Mohrman, 1995)
- Is characterized by a great deal of variety, uncertainty, and exceptions.
- Often occurs in highly dynamic and complex environments.

A deliberations analysis investigates how people in the organization think and the process by which their decisions are made. The intent is to find opportunities to improve individuals' knowledge, the collective thinking process, and the structure of the organization.

Understanding how people pool their knowledge and work together in a deliberations analysis will shed light on problem areas. The results of the analysis can suggest opportunities for improving knowledge-based work systems in your change design.

When analyzing work systems, make sure to look for the following elements of effective deliberations:
- Knowledge is well developed and applied.
- Critical data are available.
- Right parties are included.
- Goals are explicit and shared.

- Discussions are fact based.
- Discussions are held at optimal points.
- Decision-making is a clear process.
- Timeframes are challenging but doable.
- Minimal bureaucracy allows for innovation.

Adapted from: Pasmore, Fitz, and Frank, <u>Fast Cycle Full Participation Work Systems Design</u>

Structuring the Data Collection

If the change involves changing **the way things are done**, an in-depth knowledge of current work processes is critical to effectively redesigning processes or structures. Changing the way things are done may include reworking processes or changing structures or technology.

If the change involves changing **what things are done**, a knowledge of current process functioning becomes less critical since new work processes will be created. However, gathering some current data is valuable so that problem areas are not repeated in new processes. Changing what things are done may include totally rethinking the mission or a core business function, such as moving from a discretionary grant program to a block grant program.

Data Collection Process and Strategy

The Design Team will need to set up a process for collecting data. Focus groups, surveys, and interviews are all effective tools for collecting data. It is always wise to ask for expert assistance in designing survey questions and conducting focus groups.

When collecting data, look for both common and conflicting themes about the current state. Common themes will highlight desired outcomes. Conflicting themes may point out a need for further investigation or provide the Design Team with a "heads up" as to possible design issues.

If possible, data collection strategies should be left in place throughout the design and implementation process. The data collection process can be used to:
- Build interest in and momentum for the change, and
- Monitor the effects of the change.